

Past tense *drunk*, *sung*, *rung* and *swum*: Non-standard tense paradigms in British English dialects

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This paper examines the use of non-standard past tense forms for a group of verbs clustering around *sing* and *drink*. On the basis of data from the new resource of the Freiburg English Dialect Corpus (FRED), traditional dialect data from across Great Britain is quantified and compared across regions. Contra Oldireva, who claims that "modern dialectal usage ... is characterized by the patterns of variation similar to those registered in seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century grammars" (Oldireva 1999: 276), only one variant of non-standard past tense forms is highly frequent for these verbs, so much so that it sometimes even constitutes the majority option. These are past tense forms in <u>, i.e. *he rung the bell* or *she drunk ale*. Their existence can on the one hand be traced back to historical forms, as work with historical corpora corroborates. Historical continuity alone does not, however, explain their extremely frequent occurrence in present-day dialect data, especially as historically, forms were extremely variable (cf. Lass 1994). In the framework of natural morphology, I propose abstract analogy as a functional principle that can be seen to work on this class of verbs, increasing overall system congruity (in the sense of Wurzel 1984, 1987) and thus stabilizing the inflectional system(s) of these dialects.

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Oldireva, Larisa. 1999. "*Catched* or *caught*: Towards the standard usage of irregular verbs." In Irma Taavitsainen, Gunnel Melchers and Päivi Pahta, eds. *Writing in Nonstandard English*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins: 263-284.

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